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DO LIBERATED WOMEN DRIVE THEIR HUSBANDS TO DRINK? THE IMPACT OF MASCULINE ORIENTATION, STATUS INCONSISTENCY, AND FAMILY LIFE SATISFACTION ON MALE LIQUOR CONSUMPTION

By

W. Andrew Harrell

Center for Experimental Sociology
Department of Sociology
The University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2H4

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ABSTRACT

Weekly liquor consumption by sixty-two men married to working wives was found to increase as a function of dissatisfaction with family life and perceived conflict of wife's work and the marriage. Relatively high education in a wife (status inconsistency) directly increased family satisfaction, decreased perceived conflict, and, therby, indirectly reduced liquor consumption. A liberated masculine orientation facilitated the positive impact of relative education on family life satisfaction and the impact of education on lack of perceived conflict of wife's work and the marital relationship; consequently, the indirect effect of relative education on liquor consumption occurred only for "liberated" husbands.

Keywords: Liquor Consumption, Masculine Orientation, Status Inconsistency.

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INTRODUCTION

A popular theory explaining differentials in alcohol consumption is the tension reduction theory (Cappell & Herman, 1972; Cappell, 1975) which argues that individuals drink alcohol to lessen tensions arising from stressful events. An extensive literature has emerged attempting to apply tension reduction theory to explain sex differences in alcohol consumption (Johnson et al., 1977; Parker et al., 1980). Specifically, researchers have hypothesized that women in non-traditional roles will experience tension and increased alcohol consumption. Studies examining this hypothesis have provided conflicting results (Johnson et al., 1977; Nusbaumer, 1978; Parker et al., 1980; Ratliff and Burkhart, 1984).

The present research chooses to take a different approach. Rather than look for evidence of psychological distress and greater alcohol consumption in women occupying non-traditional roles, why not look for distress in married men finding themselves in non-traditional roles? Specifically, do men married to working women who are their match or better in terms of education and income experience stress and, subsequently, increased alcohol consumption? Secondly, what might enable a man to "adjust" to his superior wife? Sex role orientation might be one such mediating factor. Men who have a traditional sex role orientation, e.g., who believe that a woman's proper place is in the home and that men should be the only or chief bread-winner, will be the most adversely affected by a working wife, particualrly if she out-ranks him in education and income.

Finally, it is hypothesized that men who explicitly perceive a conflict between a wife's work outside the home and their own marital satisfaction will experience greater psychological tension and greater levels of alcohol consumption.

METHOD

The Sample. In 1980 a city-wide survey of Edmonton was conducted, involving intensive interviews with 428 randomly selected men and women. This article focuses on the responses of 62 men taken from the larger sample who were married and living with their spouse at the time, and both they and their spouse were employed outside the home.

Liquor Consumption. The major dependent variable in this study was amount of liquor consumption by a respondent (see Table 1). For the sample, four drinks per week was the median, with a range of 0 to 50 drinks.

Measures of Sex Role Orientation. Two dimensions of masculine sex role orientation were examined in this study: "Traditional masculinity" and "liberated masculinity". These dimensions were empirically derived in previous research through a factor analysis of a number of items dealing with male sex role orientation.

Status Inconsistency. This variable was measured by comparing incomes and educational attainment for both spouses. Relative income was calclulated as the wife's annual income divided by the sum of wife's and husband's income. Similarly, relative education was calculated as the wife's education in terms of years of total schooling divided by the sum of wife's and husband's.

Perceived Satisfaction-Dissatisfaction. Respondents indicated satisfaction with their family life, standard of living, and jobs. They also rated the impact of wife's work on the marriage and the amount of day-to-day pressure.

Control Variables. Two control variables -- perceived social class and age -- were introduced into the analysis because of their possible confounding relationship to other variables in the model, particularly to the dependent variable.

TABLE 1

Variables Used in the Path Analysis

Variable	Questionnaire Items	Response Categories
Liquor Consumption (X_1)	In an average week, how many drinks of spirits or liquor do you have?	Number of drinks
Family Life Satisfaction (X_2)	How satisfied are you with your family life?	Very Satisfied (7) to Very Dissatisfied (1)
Lack of Conflict of Work and Marriage (X_3)	What effect does your spouse's working have on your relationship?	Very Positive (7) to Very Negative (1)
Relative Education (X_4)	How many years of education have you (spouse) obtained?	Number of years
Liberated Masculinity (X_5)	(1) Men shouldn't be ashamed of crying in front of others. (2) It is okay for men to show physical affection towards other men. (3) In a marriage, it is just as much a man's responsibility as a woman's to care for children.	Strongly Agree (7) to Strongly Disagree (1)
Pressure in Everyday Life (X_6)	How much pressure do you experience in your everyday life?	No Pressure (1) to Great Deal (7)
Social Class (X_7)	To what social class do you belong?	Lower Class (1) to Upper Class (6)
Age (X_8)	What is your age?	Number of years
Relative Income (X_9)	What is your total family income? What is your individual income?	Amount in dollars
Standard of Living (X_{10})	How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	Very Satisfied (7) to Very Dissatisfied (1)
Job Satisfaction (X_{11})	How satisfied are you with your job?	Very Satisfied (7) to Very Dissatisfied (1)

Table 1, cont'd...

Variable	Questionnaire Items	Response Categories
Traditional Masculinity (X_{12})	(1) A husband should be entirely responsible for earning the living for a family. (2) It is more important that a husband is ambitious than that he is kind and understanding. (3) The man should take the initiative in expressing physical affection. (4) Men who don't like competitive sports are lacking in masculinity.	Strongly Agree (7) to Strongly Disagree (1)

RESULTS

In order to examine the hypotheses presented earlier, the causal model shown in Figure 1 was constructed. Multiple regression analysis was carried out to evaluate the fit of this model.

Figure 2 shows the "trimmed" path model for predictors of weekly consumption of liquor. Only path coefficients with an absolute value of 0.10 or greater and statistically significant at the .05 level or better have been retained.

Four variables directly affected liquor consumption. The tension-reduction hypothesis is supported to the extent that both family life satisfaction and perceived conflict had the predicted impact on liquor consumption. Respondents satisfied with family life consumed less liquor as did respondents reporting a positive effect of wife's working on their relationship, i.e., a lack of conflict. Older respondents consumed more liquor as did men perceiving themselves as possessing high social status.

A number of variables in the model have strong indirect effects on consumption which are mediated by family life satisfaction and perceived conflict. Men enjoying a satisfactory standard of living tend to feel good about their family life. Men whose wives are relatively well-educated when compared to themselves and men adopting a liberated masculine orientation are also contented with family life. As a result of these effects on family life satisfaction, standard of living ($p_{26}p_{12} = -0.13$), liberated masculinity ($p_{25}p_{12} = -0.08$), and wife's relative education ($p_{24}p_{12} = -0.09$) are all negatively related to liquor consumption. Perceptions of wife's work, similarly, mediates a predicted indirect effect of relative education ($p_{43}p_{31} = -0.07$), liberated masculinity ($p_{53}p_{31} = -0.07$), and standard of living ($p_{63}p_{31} = -0.06$) on consumption.

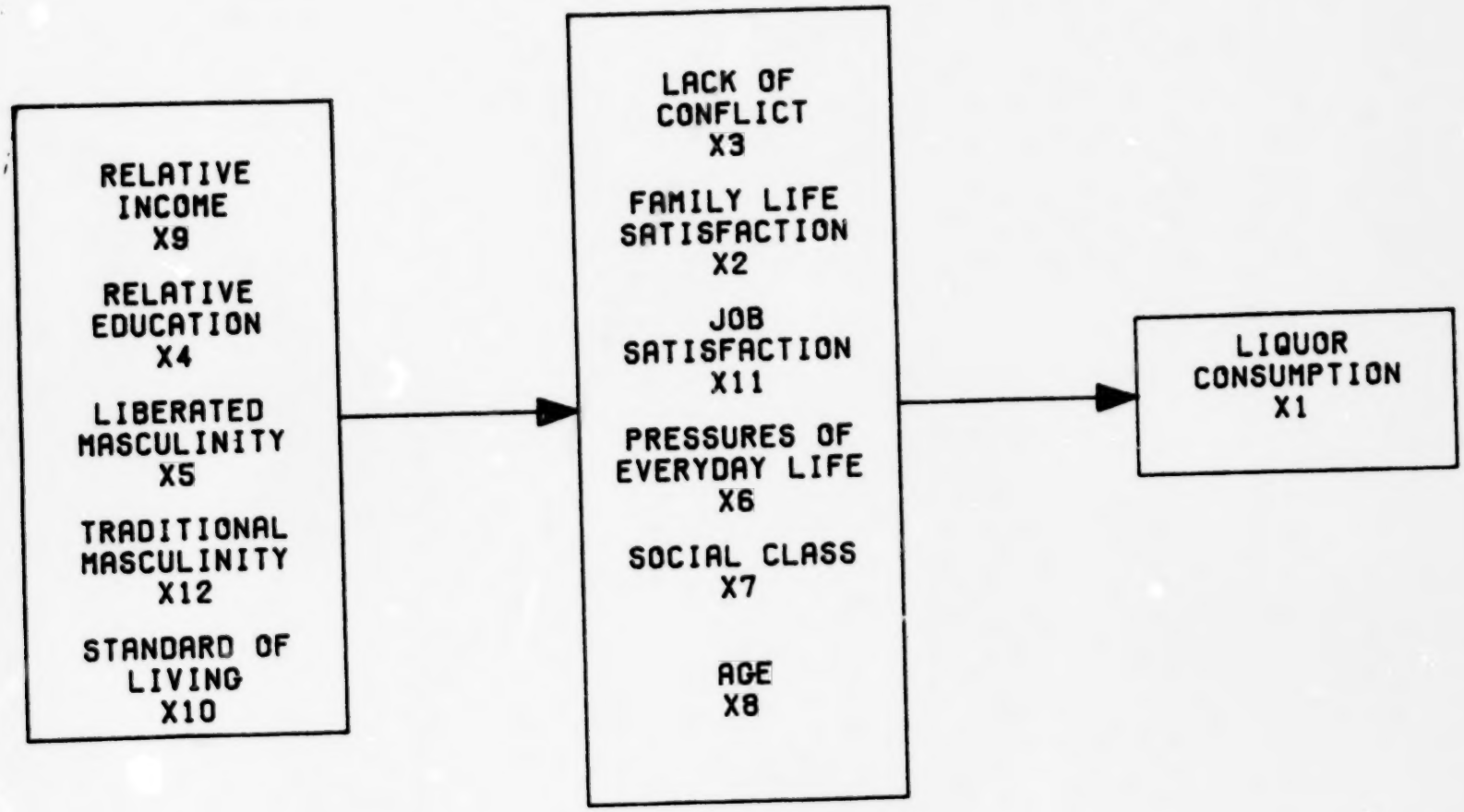

FIG. 1 HYPOTHESIZED CAUSAL MODEL

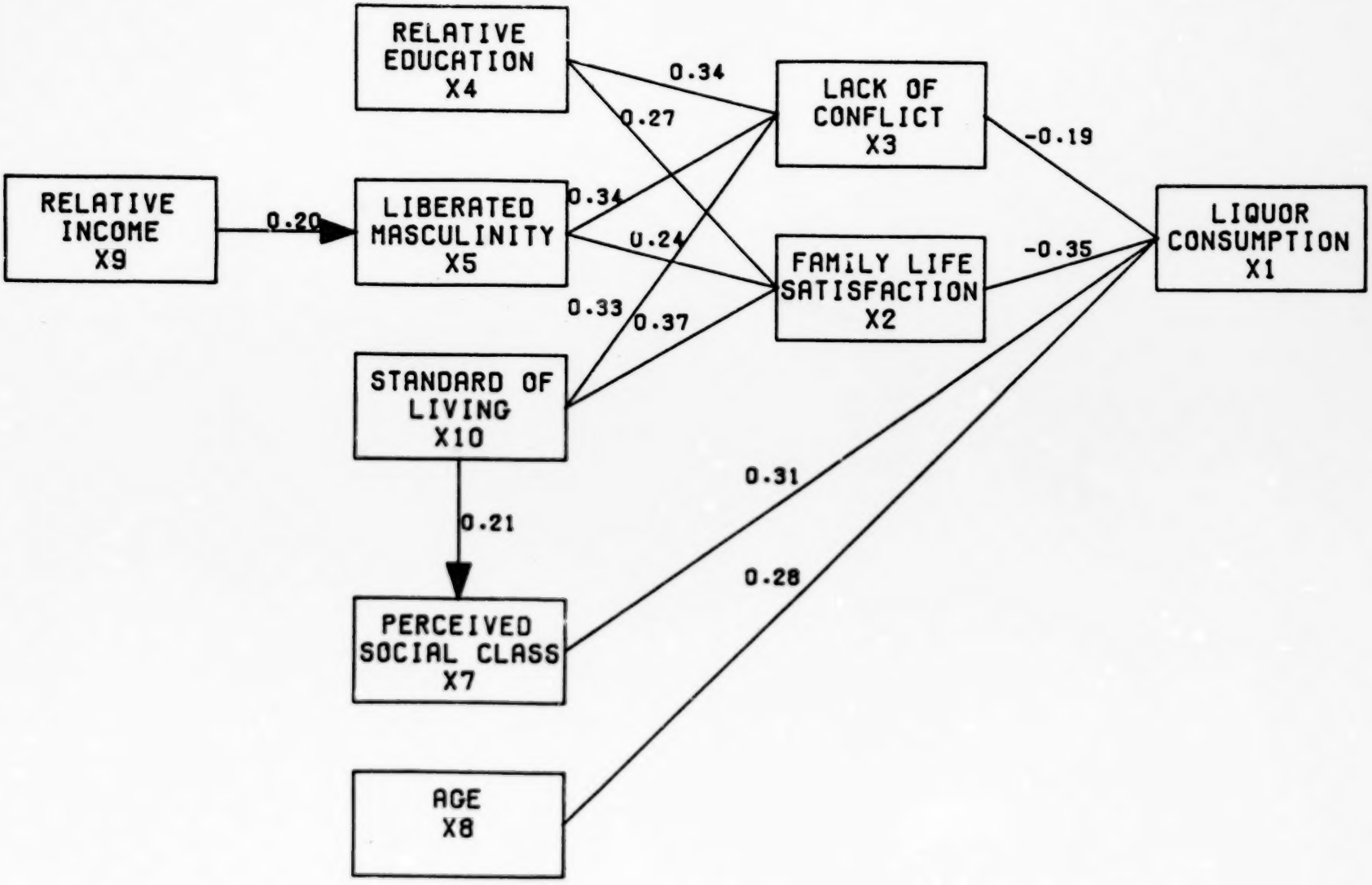

FIG. 2 STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT BETA WEIGHTS

In summarizing the analysis, while relative education and liberated masculinity have insignificant direct effects on liquor consumption, they have cumulative indirect paths equal to -0.16 and -0.18 respectively.

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that tensions, derived from a husband's dissatisfaction with his family life in a dual-career family and from a negative view of the effects of wife's work on the marital relationship, would be associated with greater liquor consumption was supported. Indeed, dissatisfaction on both counts was related to greater consumption. Wife's relative education and liberated masculinity increased satisfaction with family life and fostered a positive view of wife's work; consequently, liquor consumption was reduced by these variables. Additional analysis showed that relative education increased family satisfaction and lack of perceived conflict of work and married life for respondents above the median on liberated masculinity. That is, a husband must be a "liberated" male for wife's education to be a factor.

Marital and work roles of dual-career spouses have a dynamic effect on husband's drinking. Tensions generated from balancing these roles may increase drinking. Tensions, however, are lessened for liberated men, especially those with high earning, educated wives. Future research must explain the interaction of these factors. For example, liberated husbands may be better able to discuss and solve problems with their well-educated wives. Or, these men may feel less committed and pressured by their work because of the income generated by their wives. It would be profitable to examine the social networks, i.e., friends and fellow workers, that dual-career spouses find themselves in and how these social contexts may affect drinking.

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